First of a Series on

LIFE IN THE SOUTH AMERICAN JUNGLE

THE JUNGLE

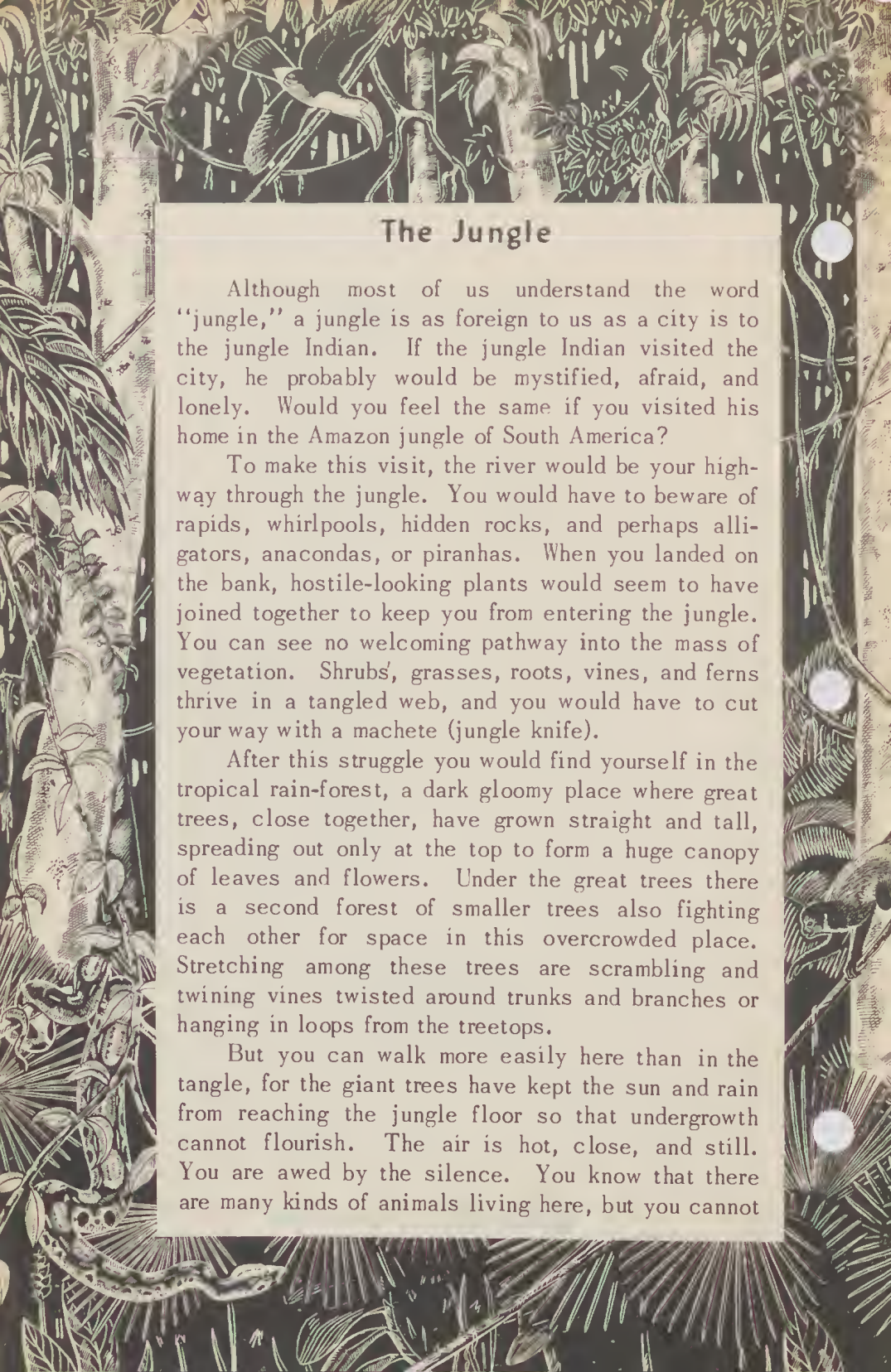
by

JUNE BUCHWALD

Raymond Foundation

Museum Stories, Number 236

October 4, 1952



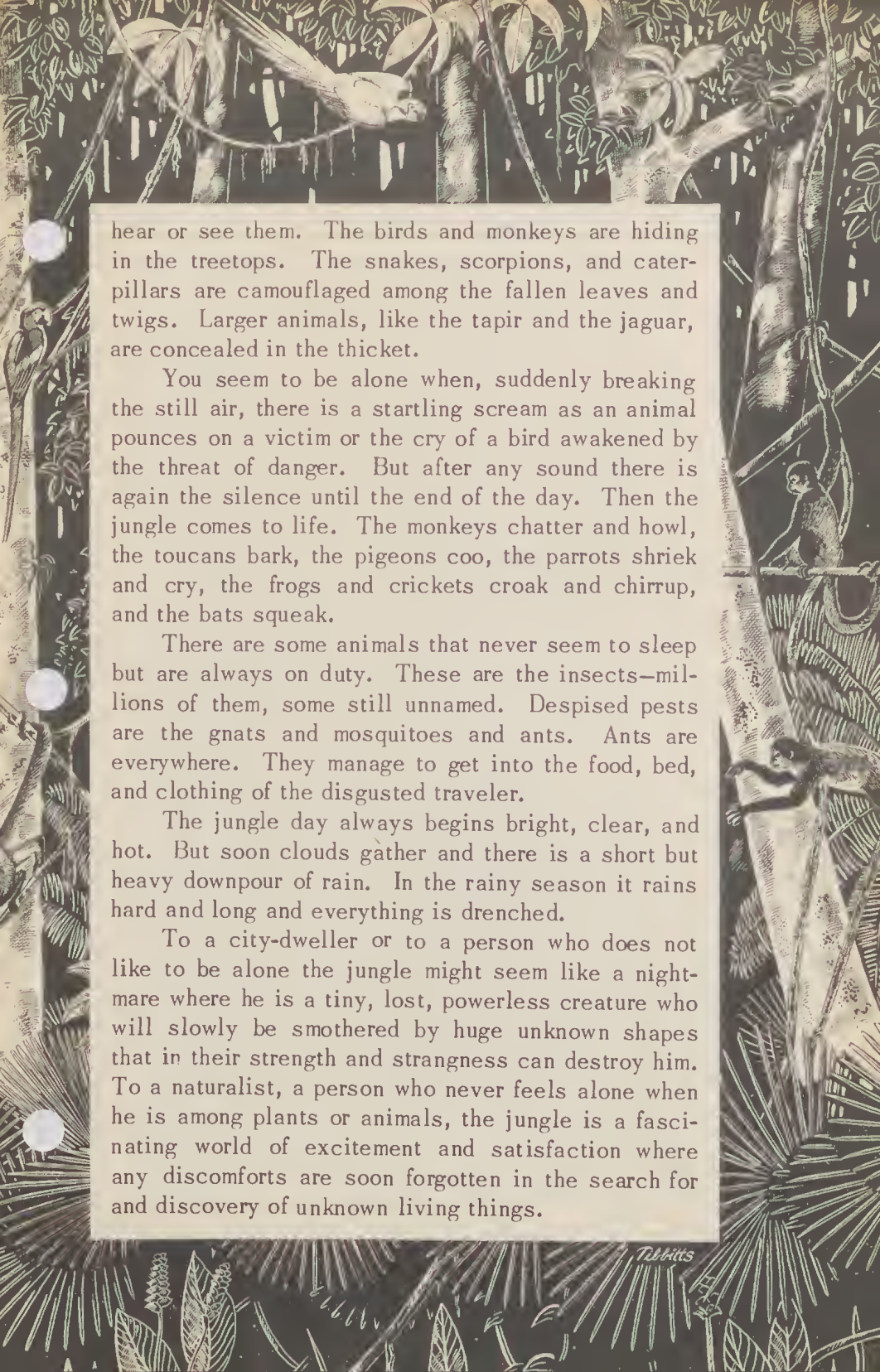
The Jungle

Although most of us understand the word "jungle," a jungle is as foreign to us as a city is to the jungle Indian. If the jungle Indian visited the city, he probably would be mystified, afraid, and lonely. Would you feel the same if you visited his home in the Amazon jungle of South America?

To make this visit, the river would be your highway through the jungle. You would have to beware of rapids, whirlpools, hidden rocks, and perhaps alligators, anacondas, or piranhas. When you landed on the bank, hostile-looking plants would seem to have joined together to keep you from entering the jungle. You can see no welcoming pathway into the mass of vegetation. Shrubs, grasses, roots, vines, and ferns thrive in a tangled web, and you would have to cut your way with a machete (jungle knife).

After this struggle you would find yourself in the tropical rain-forest, a dark gloomy place where great trees, close together, have grown straight and tall, spreading out only at the top to form a huge canopy of leaves and flowers. Under the great trees there is a second forest of smaller trees also fighting each other for space in this overcrowded place. Stretching among these trees are scrambling and twining vines twisted around trunks and branches or hanging in loops from the treetops.

But you can walk more easily here than in the tangle, for the giant trees have kept the sun and rain from reaching the jungle floor so that undergrowth cannot flourish. The air is hot, close, and still. You are awed by the silence. You know that there are many kinds of animals living here, but you cannot



hear or see them. The birds and monkeys are hiding in the treetops. The snakes, scorpions, and caterpillars are camouflaged among the fallen leaves and twigs. Larger animals, like the tapir and the jaguar, are concealed in the thicket.

You seem to be alone when, suddenly breaking the still air, there is a startling scream as an animal pounces on a victim or the cry of a bird awakened by the threat of danger. But after any sound there is again the silence until the end of the day. Then the jungle comes to life. The monkeys chatter and howl, the toucans bark, the pigeons coo, the parrots shriek and cry, the frogs and crickets croak and chirrup, and the bats squeak.

There are some animals that never seem to sleep but are always on duty. These are the insects—millions of them, some still unnamed. Despised pests are the gnats and mosquitoes and ants. Ants are everywhere. They manage to get into the food, bed, and clothing of the disgusted traveler.

The jungle day always begins bright, clear, and hot. But soon clouds gather and there is a short but heavy downpour of rain. In the rainy season it rains hard and long and everything is drenched.

To a city-dweller or to a person who does not like to be alone the jungle might seem like a nightmare where he is a tiny, lost, powerless creature who will slowly be smothered by huge unknown shapes that in their strength and strangness can destroy him. To a naturalist, a person who never feels alone when he is among plants or animals, the jungle is a fascinating world of excitement and satisfaction where any discomforts are soon forgotten in the search for and discovery of unknown living things.

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Second of a Series on

LIFE IN THE SOUTH AMERICAN JUNGLE

JUNGLE ANIMALS

by

JUNE BUCHWALD

Raymond Foundation

Museum Stories, Number 237

October 11, 1952

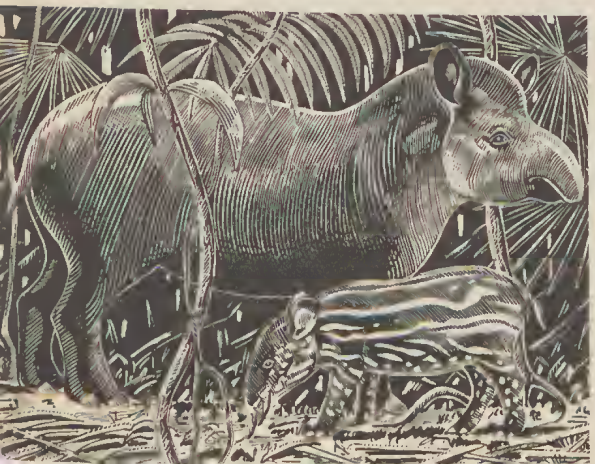
Jungle Animals

The South American jungle is the home of many kinds of animals. Besides the familiar animals that you expect to see in a northern forest there are comedians, shy types, gaudy dressers, and killers.

A tropical rain-forest would naturally be the home of tree-dwellers, and this is where you find those wistful comics, the monkeys. A funny acrobat is the spider monkey, with his long slim body and tail that is used like a hand as he leaps from one swinging branch to another. The loud-mouthed comedians are the howler monkeys who, because of an unusual physical device, are able to shout in voices that can be heard for miles around. Tiniest of the monkeys are gray woolly marmosets who scurry around through the treetops like active little squirrels.

Tree neighbors of the monkeys are the brightly colored birds. In addition to our many North American birds that only spend the winter in the jungle, there are the permanent residents—the many members of the parrot family; the great-beaked quarreling toucans; the bellbirds with their bell-like calls; the mocking birds, the great imitators; and those remarkable hoatzins, strange primitive birds with lizard-like fingers on the bends of their wings to use to climb up tree-trunks into the nests.

On the ground we find the king of the American cats, the jaguar. He is a magnificent animal with spots like a leopard and a lean body that is agile enough to climb and to swim. The jaguar has an enormous appetite. He feeds on almost every animal of the tropics, from insects to tapirs. Another killer is the dreaded bushmaster, the largest poisonous snake in America. He is a relative of the rattlesnake. The yel-



low and brown bushmaster glides along through the leaves at night in search of a small victim. Another giant snake is the anaconda, a water animal. He is not poisonous. He is a constrictor who winds his body around a victim to suffocate him and then swallows him whole, head first. An opposite type from the jungle killers is the shy tapir, who feeds only on plant-life. The tapir is an odd animal. He looks like a giant pig, tastes like beef, and is related to the horse. He is recognized by his long snout. For protection, which he truly needs against all the animals and men who hunt him, the young one is spotted and striped for camouflage. When grown, the tapir will hide or, if possible, take to the water to escape his enemies.

Everything seems to grow big in the jungle, and so does the capybara, the largest rodent in the world. This water animal is about one hundred pounds in weight and four feet in length. His muddy color, bristly sparse hair, heavy nose and jaws, tiny ears, and no tail make him a rather clumsy-looking animal.

Probably the strangest of all the animals is the great anteater. He is as large as a pig, and yet he eats only small insects—termites and ants. He has a tail as long as his body and a narrow head about six times as long as it is wide. He has a small mouth with no teeth and a long sticky tongue that shoots out to lap up ants. He has long heavy claws on his front feet to use for tearing down anthills and for defending himself.

As you can see, although these animals are quite unlike in their appearance and habits and although they even compete and fight with each other, they have one thing in common. All of them are adapted to the peculiar environment of the great tropical forest of South America.

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Third of a Series on

LIFE IN THE SOUTH AMERICAN JUNGLE

THE JUNGLE INDIAN

by

JUNE BUCHWALD

Raymond Foundation

CHICAGO NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM
RESEARCH EDUCATION
FOUNDED 1893 BY MARSHALL FIELD

Museum Stories, Number 238

October 18, 1952

The Jungle Indian

It is hard to believe that there are people living today who have never bought a loaf of bread in a grocery store, have never ridden in a streetcar, have never used a telephone, and have never slept in a bed. But the Amazon jungle Indians of northwest South America have never heard of such things. When bread is needed, they make their own of cassava. They transport themselves by walking or by paddling a dugout canoe, they send messages on drums, and they sleep in hammocks.

These Indians are one of the few groups of people living today who are little affected by modern ways of life. We call them primitive people. But do not make fun of them, for just consider how you would make out—in fact, how long you would live—in a land like theirs. In a jungle

with its strange and harmful plants and animals, its suffocating tangle of vegetation, and its unusual climate, the people must fight with nature just to continue to live. Because of his peculiar environment, the jungle Indian differs from us in many ways. First of all, he never lives in one house for a very long time. Instead of repairing it, he moves on, for he feels that his food crops need more

fertile land anyway and there is plenty to be had. And by now the pathways he has made from the river to his house are well worn and he thinks that they are too easily seen by his enemies. Instead of having his own house for his family, the jungle Indian lives with his whole tribe in one big house and the entire group works and plays together, sharing food and many possessions.

Then in this climate it is not necessary to wear much clothing. For this reason decorations and ornaments are more important here than clothes. Tight fiber bands are worn around the legs or the arms. Ornaments include brightly colored feather headdresses, necklaces of jaguar teeth or toucan bills, bracelets of iguana tails or monkey teeth, and earrings of beetle wings. Hats are never worn. For protection against the daily rain, the jungle Indian puts a palm leaf over his head like an umbrella. He never wears shoes, and so his toes remain flexible. After some practice he can pick up something with his toes just as easily as he can with his fingers.

The daily food is not so varied and plentiful as ours. Even the experienced hunter comes home empty-handed, and then the supper must come from the few crops grown in the fields by the women. The girls help their mothers in the daily work and consider it a sort of play. The boys must learn how to fish and hunt. Fathers, instead of giving their sons bats and balls to play with, give them little javelins and blowguns.

So you can see that the lives of these Indians depend upon adapting to the jungle. However, if you saw one of the Indians doing something that you could not explain as being a result of his environment and you asked him why he does this, he would say that it is "pia" (our custom). Custom is the law and decides how everything shall be done in the tribe. For example, when a child does some harm or mischief to another, he is not punished. If he destroys another's property, his parents must repay in some manner. This kind of action is taken because it is "pia," the custom. And no doubt you boys and girls reading this wish that it were "pia" in our country, too.

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Fourth of a Series on

LIFE IN THE SOUTH AMERICAN JUNGLE

THE JUNGLE "MALOKA"

by

JUNE BUCHWALD

Raymond Foundation

CHICAGO NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM
RESEARCH EDUCATION
FOUNDED 1893 BY MARSHALL FIELD

Museum Stories, Number 239

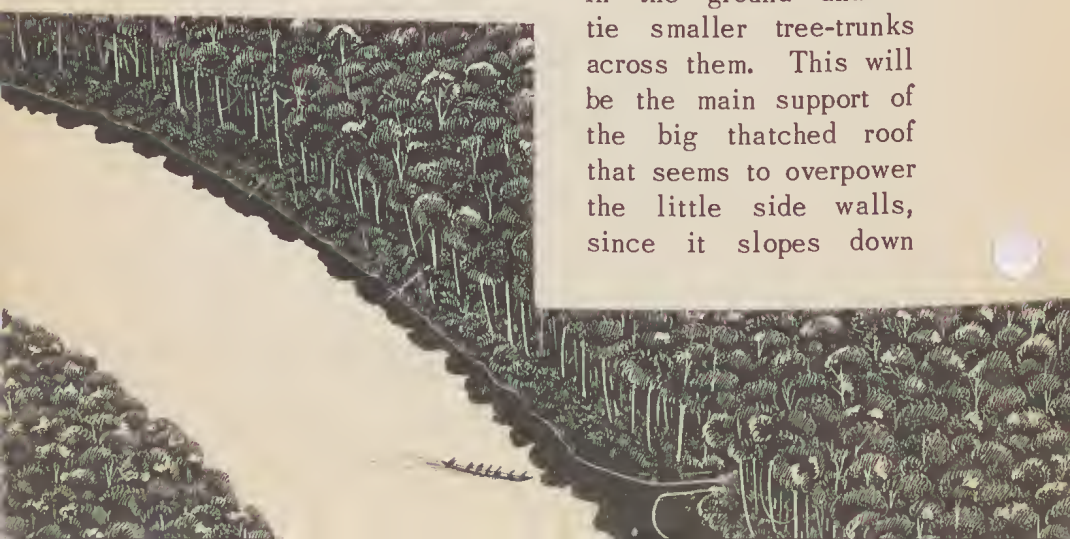
October 25, 1952

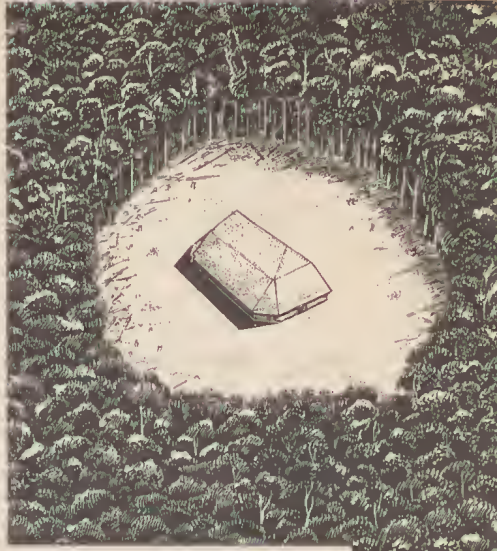
The Jungle "Maloka"

There is a pathway, but it is so well hidden that it can hardly be found. It starts at the river that is the only passageway through the Amazon jungle of northwest South America. The Indians made the path only for their own tribesmen and not for any other man. To follow it is difficult, for it turns here and there and is stopped again and again by obstacles. But finally the path ends in a burst of sunlight at a great opening in the vast dark tangle of jungle plant-life. Looming up in this clearing is the huge tent-like "maloka" of the jungle Indians, a house built in a place hidden from enemies.

The "maloka" looks empty. The land around it seems clean and bare. There are no pets on duty to bark or hiss at strangers. There is silence. But this house is being used. A whole village of more than fifty people is living in this great "maloka." The "maloka" is about 70 feet long, 60 feet wide, and 30 feet high. It will be used only for a few years. It is not a permanent home.

A jungle Indian moves frequently because the rich soil in his fields soon becomes poor after he has continually grown his crops in it. Also, the secret path to his house becomes worn and he is no longer safe from his enemies. But moving is not a problem, for his few belongings are carried easily. All the men work together to build the house. The first step is to set up four great tree-trunks in the ground and to tie smaller tree-trunks across them. This will be the main support of the big thatched roof that seems to overpower the little side walls, since it slopes down





to within three feet of the ground. Over the framework of the roof and walls are placed firm layers of palm leaves set in split bamboo. These layers are about one foot thick for protection against the rain. But the rain is persistent. It beats down daily and after two or three years it succeeds in penetrating the thatch. Inside the "maloka" there is just one big room, and all along the walls family groups settle in their little quarters with no separating walls between them. At the back of the room is a bigger area reserved for the chief.

In the center of the room is a bare space for meetings and dancing. Here from the beams are hung two huge drums made of hollow tree-trunks about six feet long. The Indians beat out messages on them with rubber drumsticks to their friends in the forest. In each family section are hammocks, stools, nets, weapons, tools, utensils, and the fire. The fire is important for cooking, warmth, and light, and the family keeps its fire burning night and day to avoid starting a new fire with a fire drill, a difficult task in the jungle dampness.

You probably would not enjoy living in a jungle "maloka." It is dark—there are no windows; smoky—there are no chimneys; and hot—there are so many people and fires in one room. Spiders, scorpions, and bats live in the thatch of the walls and roof. But the "maloka" serves its purpose of protecting the Indians against jungle climate and perils.

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Fifth of a Series on

LIFE IN THE SOUTH AMERICAN JUNGLE

THE JUNGLE HUNT

by

JUNE BUCHWALD

Raymond Foundation

Museum Stories, Number 240

November 1, 1952

The Jungle Hunt

The jungle Indian is like the jungle animals in many ways. When hunting, he is at his best. Like a snake, he moves swiftly but silently through the dense undergrowth; like a jaguar, he is agile and stealthy; like a deer, he is lightfooted; like a tapir, he can hide himself effectively; and like all animals, he knows how to watch. Nothing escapes the jungle Indian, no matter how small it may be. He sees everything. A broken twig, a tiny track, a flight of birds—all these are noticed by the stalking hunter and mean something to him.

To hunt big animals, the Amazon Indian uses barbed spears or javelins with poisoned points. This poison is very powerful, and a small drop kills an animal. The long smooth spear is made of palm, and the sharp spearhead is of bamboo. The javelin is also made of palm, and fixed in the point is a poisoned spine that breaks off in the animal's body. The javelin is about six feet long, but it is so thin and light that as many as seven javelins can be carried by the hunter in one hand.

To hunt small animals, like monkeys, capybaras, and birds, the jungle Indian uses a blowgun. This weapon, which is made of palm too, can be from eight to fourteen feet long. It is a tube made of two pieces of palm bound together, and it has a mouthpiece of vegetable ivory.

The arrows that the Indian blows through the tube are about nine inches long. They are made from the ribs of palm leaves and are tufted at one end with silk-cotton. The other end of the arrow has a poisoned tip cut in such a way that it breaks off in the animal's body. Sometimes arrows with blunt points are used in hunting birds, so that the feathers will not be damaged. The Indian can blow the arrow through the blowgun to a distance of as much as fifty yards. He carries the arrows in a bamboo quiver that he hangs from his neck.

The Indian rarely misses his target, for in boyhood he learns how to use the weapons when he makes javelins and spears and blowguns to play with. Also his experience as a child in catching small animals—lizards, snakes, and turtles—helps him in real hunts.

There are many jungle rivers and streams where the Indian can fish. Sometimes he uses a line and baited hook of wood or thorn, a spear, or a net. But the most successful way is to poison the water. To do this, the Indian first weaves a fence of palm branches and places it across a stream. Then he pounds the roots of a certain jungle bush and throws them into the stream just above the fence. These roots poison the fishes. The fence helps to keep the fishes in one spot, and the Indian can get them out of the water easily with a net or spear.

The Indian also sets traps for animals. The traps are simply made but they are cleverly planned. Monkeys dashing along a tree-branch are caught in a noose, birds are snared, small ground animals fall into holes covered with grass and leaves, and larger animals drop into hidden pits with sharp stakes at the bottom.

If the traps are empty, it is not because the Indian has been careless or unwise in their construction but rather because the animals are scarce. At sundown the successful hunter brings home his catch to be cooked for supper by his wife. Perhaps it will go into the stew that is kept cooking day in and day out and to which is added every day some new item of food, depending on what the hunter brings home. Nothing is stored away for the future in case that hunting is poor. The Indian lives from day to day. When the cooking pot is empty, the family goes hungry. But when the pot is full, the Indian eats and eats until he, too, is full.

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Sixth of a Series on

LIFE IN THE SOUTH AMERICAN JUNGLE

JUNGLE FARMING AND FOODS

by

JUNE BUCHWALD

Raymond Foundation

Museum Stories, Number 241

November 8, 1952

Jungle Farming and Foods

While the Indian hunter is off in the deep, dense jungle of South America in search of game, his wife is in the fields. His day might seem more adventurous than hers as he treks out into the wilds on a journey where anything could happen. The woman probably has a monotonous day as she works hard, digging, sowing, and harvesting in the hot sun. But for the man there is constant danger from wild animals and disappointment when hunting is poor.

It is always possible that the hunter will come home empty-handed. And so it is the daily toil of the women in the fields that assures the family of daily food. The farming is left entirely to the women except for clearing the land, which the men do by cutting down the small trees and burning the large ones.

An Indian jungle farm is not so orderly as we are accustomed to seeing. The Indian's wooden farming tools are crude and cannot take care of the uneven and broken ground and the fast-growing weeds. But in spite of all these difficulties the women manage to harvest pumpkins, sweet potatoes, yams, corn, coca, tobacco, and cassava, the most important crop of all. There is no special harvest season. The crops grow and ripen all year around in this land where there is no winter.

We call bread the "staff of life" because it is our most important food. And so it is to the jungle Indian, too—bread made from the cassava plant. However, most of the varieties of cassava are poisonous, and so the women must make the cassava fit for eating. They gather the roots from the field and carry them in baskets to the river. There the women wash them, peel them with a knife or with the teeth, and wash them again.

After the roots are taken home, each one is split into about three or four pieces and put in a bowl near the fire to soak for about twenty-four hours. Then the cassava is mashed and grated and put into a squeezer made of woven splints, where the poisonous juice is pressed out. What is left is meal, which is sifted and dried. This meal, which

looks like sawdust, is often eaten just as it is. To make bread, the meal is kneaded with water, put into a pan, and cooked over a fire. Cassava bread looks and tastes like a dry, stale pancake. The poisonous cassava juice is saved and, after it has been heated to drive off the poison, it is used as a flavoring for stews.

In addition to meat from jungle animals and cassava bread, vegetables are eaten. They are boiled and pounded and seasoning is added—not salt, for that is scarce, but fish, frogs, worms, ants, or peppers. This might make the main meal, which is eaten in the evening.

The morning meal is light and might consist of cold cassava bread and meat left over from the meal of the night before. A hunter, particularly, never eats much in the morning, and if he should get hungry during the day he can try to find fruit to eat. Food is not so plentiful in the jungle as you might think. He may not eat much, but the jungle Indian drinks a lot—a kind of tea in the morning and, later in the day, water, fruit drinks, and a beverage made from the roots of the cassava plant.

The woman is both the farmer and the cook. She cooks by putting the earthenware pot right on the fire logs. She covers the pot with a single leaf, stirring the food occasionally with any stick that is handy. When the food is cooked, the Indian helps himself. The hot-pot is always ready, kept warm over a constant fire, and an Indian dips into the hot-pot whenever he is hungry.

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Seventh of a Series on

LIFE IN THE SOUTH AMERICAN JUNGLE

JUNGLE CRAFTS

by

JUNE BUCHWALD

Raymond Foundation

Museum Stories, Number 242

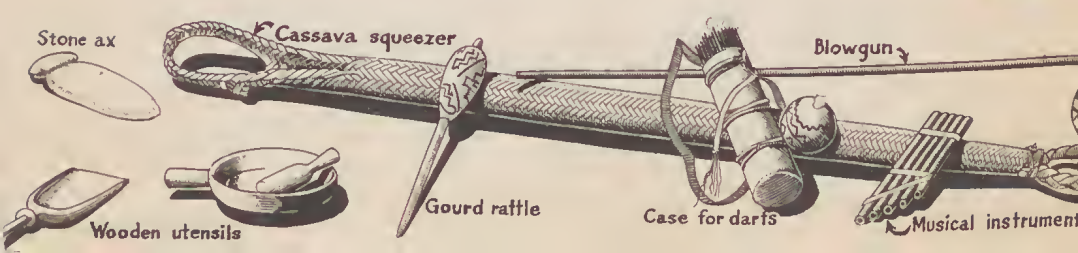
November 15, 1952

Jungle Crafts

Indian crafts in the South American jungle are simple and few. Pottery is made by the women, who mold by hand well-shaped vessels of clay. They find this clay on the river banks and mix it with wood ashes. They rub the clay between their hands until they have long rolls. Then, starting from a base, they build up a pot by coiling these rolls around and around and pressing them into shape. This is the coil method of pottery-making. After the pot has reached the right height, it is rubbed smooth and dried in the sun. Then it is baked and polished. Besides this pottery, flat earthenware plates, gourd containers, and wooden platters are made.

The women are also skillful basket-makers. From plaited bark-fiber or cane a large basket is made that can be carried on the back attached to a bark-fiber band worn around the forehead. We call this a tumpline. Often when the Indians are on a hunt they make temporary baskets. If an Indian finds something he wants to take back to camp with him, he can make in about five minutes a nice box-like basket of palm leaves. Then he has something in which to carry his treasure.

A very important craft is hammock construction—also done by the women. First of all they make string from vegetable fiber, doing by hand all the hard work of shredding and twisting. Then this fiber cord is strung back and forth between two posts, and across these cords are knotted cross-strings. This hammock tied to the house poles might seem like an uncomfortable bed to you, but in the jungle it is ideal. It keeps the hordes of crawling insects away because the thin supporting ropes of the hammock do not provide an adequate highway for the pests. To keep warm during the chilly night, the Indian, who does not know about blankets, keeps a fire burning under his

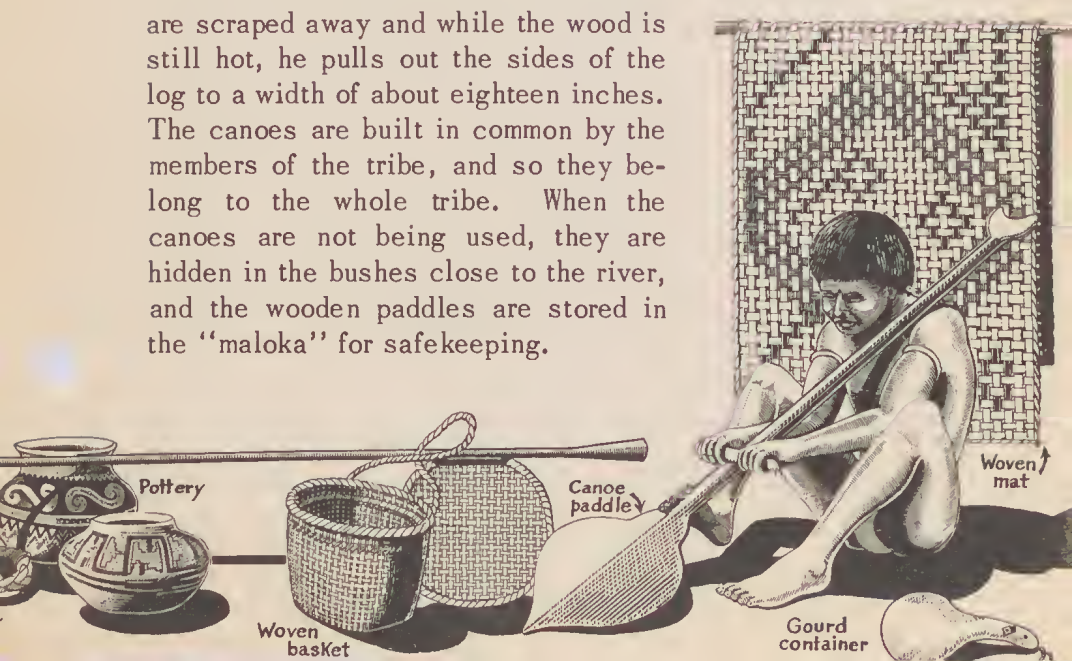


hammock. The fire also helps to keep insects away. Another necessity in the life of the jungle Indian is the cassava squeezer used in the making of cassava bread, the main food of the people. This squeezer is a long tube-like basket made from woven splints. It is open at each end and has loops attached to the ends.

The top loop is hung over a beam in the "maloka," and through the bottom loop is thrust a long pole. And this is how the device works. Through the top opening of the long basket is stuffed the mash grated from the poisonous cassava roots. Then an Indian sits on the pole, and his weight pulls down the basket, making it longer and thinner. This squeezes the mash, and out of the bottom opening drips the poisonous juice.

Because the main passageway through the jungle is the river, a boat is very important. For just one crossing, an Indian can make himself a temporary canoe in a little more than an hour. A boat of this kind is a hollowed trunk of a certain palm tree, and after this boat has served its purpose, it will be left to drift downstream.

A more permanent canoe for travel is made from a hardwood tree, usually a cedar. The Indian hollows out a trunk about twenty feet long. To do this, he first uses a stone ax and then builds a fire with the chips to burn out the rest of the hollow. After the embers are scraped away and while the wood is still hot, he pulls out the sides of the log to a width of about eighteen inches. The canoes are built in common by the members of the tribe, and so they belong to the whole tribe. When the canoes are not being used, they are hidden in the bushes close to the river, and the wooden paddles are stored in the "maloka" for safekeeping.



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Eighth of a Series on

LIFE IN THE SOUTH AMERICAN JUNGLE

THE JUNGLE MEDICINEMAN

by

JUNE BUCHWALD

Raymond Foundation

Museum Stories, Number 243

November 22, 1952

The Jungle Medicineman

If you were exploring in the South American jungle and happened to come upon a man wandering alone dressed in a strange manner, muttering strange words, and going through strange actions, you could be quite sure that you had chanced upon an Indian medicineman.

The first thing that would show that he is a medicineman would be the fact that he is alone in the jungle. No other Indian ventures far into the bush by himself because he is afraid of getting lost in the dense forest, afraid of dangerous animals, and, most of all, afraid of his many enemies. But a medicineman often goes out alone to perform some magic with no fear of enemies attacking him because, you see, everyone fears a medicineman.

The next thing that would mark him as a medicineman would be his unusual costume. Perhaps he might be wearing a tapir skin, which no other Indian wears, or maybe he would have a dyed turban on his head, unusual headgear for a jungle Indian. But whatever he is wearing, it would be striking, odd, and different from what his tribesmen wear. He would no doubt be carrying some strange objects—lizard or snake skins, a jaguar skin, claws of a condor, magic stones, a rattle, and a shell cup. His queer actions would also mark him as a medicineman. He is out in the bush because he is making a secret drug to cure some ill tribesman or because he is working some strange magic against a rival medicineman who has caused a tribesman to die. A medicineman is very important in his tribe. Often he ranks higher than the chief. He lives with his tribesmen and yet he is set apart from them by his different way of living. He has many powers.

He is a magician, a ventriloquist, and an imitator of animal and bird sounds. He is also the poison-maker of the tribe. He knows the treasured secret of making the famous curare poison from a plant.

The most important task of the medicineman, of course, is to cure the sick Indians of his tribe. He knows how to make from plants, roots, tree bark, tobacco juice, and moss many secret drugs, medicines, and ointments that he uses in his work. The jungle Indians believe that all sickness, pain, and death are caused by an evil spirit. So it falls upon the medicineman by his magic to get rid of this evil spirit when a tribesman is sick. To do this requires a lot of noise and commotion.

If you could peek into the "maloka" during the ceremony, you would see a strange scene that might frighten you. It would be very dark. The only light would come from some smoldering cooking fires. You would hear wild cries and shrieks and sounds of animals and birds that seem to be coming from every side. There would be beating noises from the ground, whishing noises from the air, and rattle noises. All this is caused by one man, the medicineman, who is trying to call in and talk with friendly spirits who will help him cure the sick person.

Finally after all this physical effort the medicineman drops to the floor in deep sleep. When he awakens, he feels that he knows the cure for the illness and he continues with his treatment. If he cures the sick one, he receives presents. If he fails, he is not punished, for his excuse is that some other medicineman used stronger magic to work against the patient. But he will seek revenge on this other medicineman by performing some harmful magic against him.

Does a medicineman cure illness? This is something that many people wonder about. He does have a good knowledge of many herbs and plants, and he prepares medicines and uses methods that cure. And his patient has great faith in the medicineman and in his cures. This probably does much to bring about some extraordinary cures that have been witnessed by reliable people.

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Ninth of a Series on

LIFE IN THE SOUTH AMERICAN JUNGLE

THE JUNGLE DANCE

by

JUNE BUCHWALD

Raymond Foundation

CHICAGO NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM
RESEARCH EDUCATION
FOUNDED 1893 BY MARSHALL FIELD

Museum Stories, Number 244

November 29, 1952

The Jungle Dance

A loud, deep drumming is heard throughout the great jungle, rich-sounding notes that ring out over many miles of the trackless land of South America. The Indian stops his work to listen and then runs excitedly to his family with the welcome news that there is to be a dance.

The invitation is given by the chief, who sends out the message by beating on the two big signal drums that hang from the rafters in the center of the "maloka." A dance to the jungle Indian is like a big wonderful party to you. Dances are held many times throughout the year to celebrate food harvests, successful hunts or wars, and the building of a new "maloka." Or there might be a dance just because the chief wants to give a party.

The Indians prepare happily for the dance. They make cassava bread and fruit drinks. They climb up to the rafters of the "maloka" to bring down their ceremonial costumes that have been stored there since the last dance. The men will wear feather headdresses made from the brilliant plumage of the jungle birds. They will put on necklaces and arm and leg bands of polished nutshells that will rattle when they dance. The women paint their bodies with red, black, and white designs.

Then the night of the dance arrives. What a change has taken place in the clearing about the "maloka"! Usually it is a dark, quiet, empty area. But this night it is ablaze with light from huge bonfires, noisy, and filled with hundreds of joyous Indians with their bamboo flutes, reed panpipes, and gourd rattles. The dark interior of the "maloka" is lighted with many torches that cast a glow on the chief, who sits in the center.

When all have assembled outside, a line forms and the "grand march" begins. Led by a high-stepping dancer, the men and women parade around the "maloka" and then into it and around the chief. At a certain signal the dancers stop and there is a great silence. The chief tells in song the reason for the party, and then the dancing and singing begin. The men all join together, dancing in a circle,

and the women dance inside the circle or outside. The steps are simple—stepping forward and backward and stamping and toeing the ground. The rhythm seems to be the most important thing and the earth shakes with the stamping of the beat. Those who are not taking an active part squat in the background and shout out words of praise and encouragement to the dancers.

During the dancing it is customary for a tribesman to enter the "maloka" in comic dress topped with a huge absurd hat. He pays no attention to anything but stands where all can see him and sadly begins a loud chanting about some misfortune that has happened to him. He drones on and on, and no one seems to pay any attention. However, if a dance should end while he is moaning, the others laugh and scoff at him, which does not bother him at all. But the chief listens to him and, if the complaint is serious, he will consider it at a tribal meeting.

In addition to the dancing and, of course, eating and drinking, there is singing. One man, who is the leader, sings alone, and the others join in the chorus. The songs are simple, with strange rhymes and words that have been handed down from the ancestors.

Since the dance is the only kind of entertainment in the jungle, the Indians always look forward to this time when they can sing, dance, act, and feast, and they prepare for it by learning the traditional songs and dances. Even the children in their jungle play practice the steps and tunes so that they may be ready when it is time for them to join in the excitement of the Amazon dance.

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